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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in that country

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the request of the Security Council contained in the statement issued by its President on 26 September 2001 (S/PRST/2001/25), in which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed of the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic and the situation in that country. The report builds on my previous report (S/2012/374) of 29 May 2012, and provides an update on developments in political, security, socioeconomic, humanitarian, human rights, child protection and gender issues as well as on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA).

II. Political situation

2. Since my last report, the political environment has evolved significantly. National stakeholders resumed dialogue, which led to the consensual adoption of an election management body. In addition, the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP), a national rebel group, finally acceded to the 2008 Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

3. After two national workshops set up to review the Electoral Code, in November 2011 and January 2012, the President of the Central African Republic, François Bozizé, instructed the Minister for Territorial Administration and Decentralization to continue discussions with political parties from the presidential majority and the opposition and relevant civil society organizations. In this context, a third workshop was held from 10 to 13 September with the facilitation of national and international electoral experts from the African Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The participants agreed on the establishment of an independent and permanent elections management body, the Autorité nationale des élections, composed of seven members. The active involvement of my Special Representative, the former President of Burundi, Pierre Buyoya, as the Special Envoy of the International Organization of la Francophonie,

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the Special Representative of the President of the Commission of the African Union, the Ambassadors of France and the United States of America and the Representative of the European Union Delegation, was critical in helping to ease tension and break the deadlock in the positions of the various parties.

4. The positive political environment that was created persisted through a fourth workshop held from 24 to 27 September. With the support of BINUCA and the participation of electoral experts dispatched to Bangui by the International Organization of la Francophonie, the African Union and the United Nations, the participants from the Central African Republic approved a revised draft electoral code. At the time of the report, the draft electoral code was before the National Assembly for consideration.

5. During the period under review, President Bozizé replaced two ministers accused of plotting a coup d'état: his nephew, the Minister of State for Finance and Budget, and the Minister of Justice and Moralization, replaced on 1 June and 16 July, respectively. The Minister for Finance, considered one of the most influential figures in the regime, had been deemed a possible contender for succession to the President. Both dismissed ministers have left the country and no investigations have been initiated based on the allegations.

6. On 25 August, after a year of negotiations with the Government, CPJP, as noted above, finally acceded to the 2008 Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The signing of the Agreement marked a turning point for the political and security environment of the Central African Republic, as CPJP had been the last national armed group outside the framework. In addition, it provided opportunities for the launch of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities in the north-east part of the country.

7. On 19 September, the National Assembly adopted a strategy to fight corruption, which includes, inter alia, the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption; the establishment of a national authority to fight corruption composed of representatives of the Government, the private sector and civil society; the harmonization of national legislation with international standards; training and capacity-building of civil servants; and the development of codes of conduct.

8. From 29 to 31 October, the Central African Republic-Chad Commission held its thirteenth session in N'Djamena. The Commission discussed security challenges during the transhumance period, taxation issues and the repatriation of 70,000 Central African refugees from Chad. Subsequently, the two countries signed 10 agreements on, inter alia, customs and movement of cattle. In addition, the Minister for Territorial Administration and Decentralization reported to the press that the repatriation of the special forces of Chad deployed in Bangui in 2003 to reinforce the Presidential Guard had been agreed upon.

9. During the reporting period, the founder and former president of the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR), Michel Djotodia, returned to the Central African Republic after six years in exile and was reinstated as the leader of UFDR. He reaffirmed his commitment to the 2008 Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement and to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. However, on 10 December, elements associated with UFDR attacked the towns of Ndélé, Sam Ouandja and Ouadda in the north-east, in serious violation of the

Agreement. Elements of the Chadian National Army crossed into the Central African Republic in the Ouham prefecture on 17 December at the request of the Government of the Central African Republic to support the counteroffensive of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA).

III. Support to national mediation efforts

10. The National Council for Mediation played a significant role in the signing, on 8 September, of an agreement on the voluntary repatriation of the Chadian rebel leader of the Front populaire pour le redressement (FPR), Baba Laddé, and his group. Following a request of the leader of FPR to discuss with the authorities of Chad the terms of his return to his country, the national mediator led a Central African delegation, which included Baba Laddé himself, in a three-day negotiation in N'Djamena. The parties agreed that the FPR fighters, still in the territory of the Central African Republic, would return to Chad within a one-month period. BINUCA and the Mission de Consolidation de la Paix of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (MICOPAX) provided logistic and technical support for the repatriation of the leader of FPR, at the request of the Government.

11. In October, the National Council for Mediation, upon instruction from the President, coordinated a Government plan to repatriate FPR combatants and their dependants from the Central African Republic. In the ensuing process, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) catered for the humanitarian needs of the families of the FPR combatants. The Government of Chad has reportedly announced a package of incentives to encourage the return of the remaining Chadian FPR elements. However, the latest reports indicated that a sizeable number of former FPR rebels have returned to the Central African Republic.

12. In an effort to prevent conflicts from escalating into violence, the National Council for Mediation proposed the establishment of local mediation councils in the majority of the 16 prefectures of the country to mediate military, political, economic and social disputes. BINUCA will provide financial support to the mediation cells through extrabudgetary funds. To date, four local mediation councils have been established, in Birao (Vakaga prefecture), Bria (Haute-Kotto), Kaga-Bandoro (Nana-Gribizi) and Ndélé (Bamingui-Bangoran). Four additional cells are envisaged to be established, in Bouar (Nana-Mambéré prefecture), Markounda (Ouham), Obo (Haut-Mbomou) and Zako (Ouaka).

IV. Security situation

13. During the period under review, the security situation continued to improve in most parts of the country, which allowed the United Nations to resume its activities in the Vakaga prefecture. However, security concerns remained at a high level in the northern parts of the country, where new armed groups appear to transit freely, and in the Haut-Mbomou prefecture, where the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) remained active. The recent attacks by UFDR in the north-east have exacerbated insecurity in this region.

14. On 2 August, a peaceful protest by disgruntled youth against the process of recruitment into the armed forces quickly degenerated into violence in some neighbourhoods in Bangui. The prison of N'Garagba was attacked and over 500 detainees escaped. The demonstrators also ransacked the office of the Mayor and destroyed a statue of the President. Their action was explained by the fact that they had been assured that they would be recruited upon payment of a sum of FCFA 5,000 (approximately $10), a substantial amount by Central African standards.

15. The volatility of the security situation in the western and north-western parts of the country remained a serious concern. Reports from United Nations entities operating in the regions indicated the presence of new armed groups allegedly linked to the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC). The groups allegedly tried to recruit demobilized combatants in the area. Fortunately, the launch of the reinsertion programme, with funds made available by the Peacebuilding Fund, has changed the social dynamics in the region, leading to resistance to new recruitments by the local communities.

16. The Ombella Mpoko prefecture, once considered the safest place in the country, is now marked by the presence of an armed group which is operating close to the capital. On 15 September, a splinter faction of CPJP, CPJP fondamentale, which includes former members of the Armed Forces and of the Presidential Guard, attacked the towns of Damara (approximately 90 kilometres north of Bangui), Sibut (160 kilometres north of Bangui) and Dékoa (230 kilometres north of Bangui). The group, estimated at 100 elements, targeted the gendarmerie and the bases of the armed forces, where they collected weapons, as well as the hospital, a gas station and a commercial bank.

17. In July and November, incidents occurred between the Forces armées centrafricain (FACA) and Chadian troops comprising the regional tripartite Central African/Chadian/Sudanese force stationed in the Vakaga prefecture, in the Central African Republic. The incidents resulted in five deaths and five injuries. In Bangui, in July, two Central African policemen were shot dead by Chadian elements of MICOPAX in retaliation for the killing of a Chadian member of the regional force.

V. Lord's Resistance Army

18. There were consistent reports of an increased LRA presence in the south-eastern region of the Central African Republic. It is alleged that they are coming from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. Thus far in 2012, 48 presumed LRA attacks were carried out, leading to 24 deaths and 85 abductions, some of the abductees being held for short periods of time to transport looted goods. As a result of LRA activities in the Central African Republic, there are 21,000 internally displaced persons and 2,400 refugees.

19. In September, the Government made available 300 troops to the African Union Regional Task Force to counter the LRA threat. They are stationed in Obo, Haut-Mbomou prefecture of the Central African Republic, alongside the Ugandan People's Defence Forces and military advisers from the United States of America. The Government plans to increase its participation in the African Union Regional Task Force by deploying 300 additional troops.

20. During the reporting period, BINUCA and international partners provided support to the national authorities in the Central African Republic for the elaboration of a national strategy on LRA. These international efforts notwithstanding, a number of serious challenges remain, mainly relating to the funding of the new force and the existence of security gaps in south-eastern Central African Republic and north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which allow the LRA to operate easily.

21. BINUCA has strengthened its monitoring activities, in collaboration with national, regional and international partners. At the end of May 2012, BINUCA deployed two consultants to Obo, and has reinforced its coordination capacity on LRA issues. The World Bank provided funding for an additional consultant in Bangui; and coordination has been greatly enhanced among BINUCA, the Government, the African Union, the World Bank and the international LRA working group.

VI. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

22. On 30 June, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Steering Committee officially approved the reinsertion strategy in the north-western region. The programme is funded through the emergency window of the Peacebuilding Fund and implemented by the National Coordination for Reintegration of the Ministry of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and BINUCA. The programme has aimed at consolidating peace and stability in the areas where demobilized combatants have settled, as well as reinforcing social cohesion within the host communities. Meanwhile, the implementation of the programme of reintegration of former combatants in the north-west is currently under way. A total of 4,796 former Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie (APRD) combatants were registered for reinsertion activities in, inter alia, agriculture, trade and crafts and small business enterprise development. They also received an initial subsistence allowance of $40. The programme is facilitated by local disarmament, demobilization and reintegration committees and outreach volunteers and covers 140 villages and local communities.

23. In June, a memorandum of understanding on the provision of food was signed by the National Coordination for Reintegration, WFP and BINUCA. In this context, assistance is being provided to 4,805 ex-combatants and their families. WFP is looking for additional resources to ensure that the assistance continues beyond 31 December 2012.

24. The Government absorbed 45 ex-combatants from the former APRD into the Central African armed forces, despite the absence of a clear security sector reform strategy. International observers raised this issue during negotiations in August between the Government and CPJP, which led to the adoption of a recommendation for the establishment of a joint committee to elaborate a strategy for the integration of ex-combatants into the defence and security forces.

25. In the north-east, the disarmament and demobilization exercises are planned to commence at the end of the rainy season. The process will focus on the Mouvement de libération centrafricain pour la justice (MLCJ), the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR) and CPJP. In September, the

Government started discussing, with BINUCA, UNDP, the African Union and the European Union, the planning phase for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations in this region. The Ministry in charge of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has prepared a plan that foresees the conclusion of the disarmament and demobilization exercises by the end of March 2013.

26. Following the meeting of friends of the Central African Republic in New York, on 5 April 2012, the Government of Luxemburg provided €100,000 ($124,378) and the Government of Australia $200,000 for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. In July 2012, the summit of the Economic Community of Central African States pledged FCFA 5 billion ($9.87 million) for the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations. Approximately €2.75 million ($3.5 million) was made available by the European Union to UNDP on 13 November for demobilization in the north-east. An additional €3 million ($3.9 million) was pledged by the European Union for reinsertion activities in the north-east.

VII. Security sector reform

27. Some progress was made during the period under review in the reform of the security institutions. However, after the adoption of a revised road map by the National Security Sector Reform Committee in February, the momentum was lost as a result of the limited capacity of the Permanent Technical Secretariat in the Ministry of Defence and the lack of engagement on the part of the Government. Out of the six subsectoral strategies identified in the road map, the Government, with the technical support of BINUCA, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Office to the African Union and the Government of France, finalized one: the subsectoral strategy on Central African armed forces and gendarmerie.

28. The strategy on democratic oversight of the security sector, completed by the Government in January 2011, with the support of BINUCA, has yet to be updated and still lacks an appropriate budget. The subsectoral strategy on police prepared by the Government, with the support of BINUCA, has yet to be finalized. Meanwhile, the subsectoral strategies for decentralization and environmental protection, justice, public finance and customs remain to be designed. Consequently, there has been no progress in the elaboration of a national security sector reform strategy.

29. BINUCA continued to provide technical assistance to the national authorities in the elaboration of a statute for the municipal police, including support for public outreach on the roles and responsibilities of the municipal police, provision of training on sexual and gender-based violence and community policing and operationalization of the computer centre of the National Police School, which BINUCA had furbished with computers.

VIII. Socioeconomic situation

30. In June, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a new extended credit facility for the Central African Republic of $63.2 million. Meanwhile, the Government has committed to improving domestic revenue mobilization while

bolstering public financial management, governance, transparency and fiscal discipline. This will create space for the implementation of poverty reduction policies articulated in the second poverty reduction strategy paper covering the period 2011-2015. Given the country's very low domestic revenue-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio, success will depend strongly on donor funding. Furthermore, limited institutional capacity, a fragile sociopolitical situation, high oil prices and the economic crisis in Europe — Central African Republic's main aid, trade and investment partner — might limit prospects for recovery and equitable growth.

31. With improvements in agricultural production as well as wood and diamond exports, the country's economic growth rate is expected to reach 4.1 per cent in 2013. Short-term prospects seem positive but, as a fragile State, the Central African Republic is still facing significant challenges in terms of economic governance, infrastructure development and poverty reduction. Earlier this year, the Government enforced the IMF recommendation that it adjust the prices of petroleum products on a monthly basis so as to reflect the price increases on the international market in order to preserve its financial resources. Social tensions arose in reaction to the negative impact of the measure on the prices of basic commodities, including food prices. The inflation rate is expected to increase and to reach 6.8 per cent by the end of the year.

32. A recent survey on poverty levels showed that 62 per cent of households live below the poverty line (on less than $1.5 per day). Poverty affects mostly rural areas and the unemployment rate has reached 20.3 per cent.

33. There has been little progress towards the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. An estimated 30 per cent of families face food insecurity. The infant mortality rate is estimated at 116 per thousand and malnutrition is an underlying cause in more than 50 per cent of cases of deaths among children under 5 years of age. Malaria, which affects 22 per cent of the population, is one of the three leading causes of morbidity and mortality among children and women.

34. HIV prevalence is estimated at about 4.9 per cent among those in age group 15-49 (the figure is 7.9 per cent in urban areas and 2.9 per cent in rural areas). The prevalence profile in the Central African Republic is for groups with higher income and better education. The United Nations country team provided financial support and strengthened the capacity of the national committee in charge of the fight against HIV/AIDS to establish a national strategic framework (2012-2016) for the fight against HIV/AIDS.

IX. Humanitarian situation

35. The Central African Republic is facing one of the world's most silent and most forgotten humanitarian emergencies. The ongoing chronic crisis has had substantial repercussions, which are being addressed through a three-pronged integrated strategy which includes the saving of lives, early recovery and development-related measures. Owing to the country's extreme level of structural vulnerability, people's lives are constantly at risk from the slightest disturbances, whether linked to natural disasters, economic issues or conflict. Nevertheless, improved security has led to a decrease in the number of internally displaced persons and an increase in the number of returnees. Humanitarian assistance continued to be provided to 65,533 internally displaced persons, of which 26,800 had been displaced in 2012, and 49,939 returned

from within the Central African Republic or neighbouring countries. In addition, assistance is being provided to 17,623 refugees from the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Meanwhile, occurrences of resource-based conflict linked to transhumance pastoralism in the north-central (Kabo-Batangafo-Kaga-Bandoro triangle) and western regions were on the rise. The seasonal movement of cattle breeders in search of pastures often results in conflict with local farmers for resources, leaving homes destroyed and populations displaced. It is estimated that 10,000 people were displaced as a result of this form of conflict.

36. An assessment by non-governmental organizations in the north-east revealed that over 45,000 people faced a major food crisis and needed immediate assistance. The global acute malnutrition rates have risen to 21 per cent, while severe acute malnutrition was at 7 per cent, which is three times above the emergency threshold. Humanitarian partners have provided immediate health and nutrition assistance, including vaccinations and therapeutic food products to malnourished children. Planting seeds and non-food items were distributed to the affected populations. Following the complete loss of livelihoods of the affected populations, the humanitarian community organized food airdrops in the towns of Gordil, Mélé, Ndiffa, Sikikédé Manou, Boromata and Tiringoulou, in the Vakaga prefecture, from 21 August to 17 September. The operation, funded by the rapid response window of the Central Emergency Fund, provided over 329 tons of food aid for over 11,319 people in need (2,148 households).

37. The 2012 Central African Republic consolidated appeal process overall requirements decreased from $134 million to $124 million. These requirements aimed to cater for 1.9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, which is almost half of the country's population. As of 22 November 2012, the consolidated appeal process, having raised $76 million, was 61 per cent funded. Shortfalls in funding have seriously affected the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide the necessary assistance. Meanwhile, access to the humanitarian caseload has been severely constrained by insecurity and lack of infrastructure. Road access in the Central African Republic remains a constant challenge owing to poor and deteriorating road infrastructure, with the country having only 700 kilometres of paved roads. Accordingly, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) is the only means of transportation for the humanitarian community. Furthermore, insecurity in the country is exacerbated by the proliferation of armed groups as well as rampant criminality and banditry. This is particularly prevalent in the eastern part of the country, where violent incidents have led to the looting and theft of equipment belonging to humanitarian organizations. These direct attacks on humanitarian actors have hindered the implementation of projects owing to movement restrictions and temporary suspension of activities. Persistent attacks by LRA in the south-east also continue to limit access, while also increasing fear among the local communities.

X. Operational activities in support of recovery and development

38. Since the start of the implementation of the second poverty reduction strategy paper (2011-2015) towards the end of 2011, UNDP, in collaboration with the World Bank and other partners, has provided continuous support to the Government in

revising its priority action plan and assisted in drafting an advocacy document in preparation of a possible donor's meeting. In addition, UNDP supported the accelerated pro-poor growth policy through the establishment of three public-private dialogue clusters in the agricultural, mining and forestry sectors. UNDP also participated in the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework for Food Security, permitting the Central African Republic to become the first post-conflict country, among all the African countries selected for the 2011-2012 roll-out, to finalize the process.

39. With the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Government formulated a national investment programme for agriculture and food security within the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of the African Union New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This is a sector-wide plan for coordinating and harmonizing the resources needed to accelerate the implementation of existing and new initiatives designed to address national and sectoral development priorities. In the meantime, the United Nations country team continued to support the sectors of food production and horticulture for vulnerable groups. This assistance improved the livelihoods of 6,200 families through the cultivation of vegetables and staple foods, provided better access to markets, and enhanced the monitoring of food security through an enhanced integrated framework for the classification of food security in the country.

40. The United Nations country team further contributed to the early recovery efforts of the Central African Republic through the formulation of a capacity development strategy in the areas of poverty reduction, access to microfinancial services by vulnerable populations, the fight against HIV/AIDS, environmental protection and the fight against climate change. Regarding access to microfinancial services by vulnerable populations, the United Nations country team contributed to the training of staff in microfinance institutions on national financial regulations and protection of beneficiaries' requirements. Furthermore, UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) provided equipment to five national financing agencies, in Bangassou, Koui, Ndim, Ngaoundaye and Paoua.

41. In the field of environmental protection and the fight against climate change, the United Nations country team focused its interventions on sustainable management of natural resources and community involvement as a basis for the protection of endangered natural areas, the adaptation of agriculture and food security to climate change, and land conservation, as well as on rural electrification and the use of renewable energy.

XI. Human rights and rule of law

42. Reported cases of inhuman and degrading treatment, illegal arrests and incommunicado detentions, as well as enforced disappearances, remained a serious concern. In particular, the families of detainees have reported cases of failure by the judicial system to guarantee due process and to redress the abuses committed by the authorities. Cases of torture, particularly at the Bossembele military detention facility, have been brought to the attention of BINUCA. My Special Representative continued to raise human rights and rule of law issues with the Central African authorities.

43. BINUCA has received several reports of recurring abuses, including sexual violence, harassment and extortion, of the population in areas controlled or dominated by armed groups and other unidentified armed elements operating in the country.

44. From 5 to 12 September, my Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, undertook a fact-finding mission to the Central African Republic, where she met with victims of sexual violence, representatives of civil society, Government officials, non-governmental organizations, women's groups, politico-military groups, and representatives of the diplomatic corps. During the visit, the United Nations signed two communiqués with the Government: the first with the Minister for Social Affairs, National Solidarity and Gender Promotion in order to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the Government; and the second with the Ministry of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration on priorities in the field of prevention of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence.

45. The administration of the penitentiary witnessed two major setbacks as a result of the pillaging of the N'Garagba prison, on 2 August, and the looting of the prison of Sibut, on 15 September. The incidents resulted in the escape of detainees, who remained at large partly owing to the absence of prison registries. In order to assist the Government in the management of detainees, BINUCA has produced 2,500 forms for the identification and registration of detainees.

46. Discussions on critical reforms regarding the administration of justice, namely, the implementation of decrees on the organization of the courts, and the status of magistrates, as well as the draft law on access to justice, have been initiated by the new Minister of Justice and Moralization. BINUCA continued to support the Ministry of Justice and Moralization in strengthening the capacity of the judiciary through the provision of technical advice during the preparation of the Ministry's annual workplan and other processes such as legal aid and access to justice. BINUCA also continued to work closely with international stakeholders, such as the European Union, on justice sector reform and the establishment and launch of its €10 million project for the rehabilitation of the justice and police sectors.

47. During the reporting period, the Government set up a committee to eliminate the death penalty from the Penal Code. The Government received support from international partners, including UNDP, to develop a strategy to strengthen the rule of law and to improve the population's awareness of human rights through the dissemination of fundamental legislative and regulatory texts, such as the Labour Code, the Court of Appeals casebook, the paralegal practice guide and the Family Code.

48. Furthermore, UNDP funded the construction or rehabilitation of buildings housing several justice and security institutions: a High Court building was constructed in Paoua, Ouham-Pendé prefecture, and the courtroom of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals in Bangui and the magistrates' court in Bimbo, Ombella-Mpoko prefecture were rehabilitated. In order to improve the functioning and coordination of security services in remote areas of the country, UNDP constructed police stations in Bozoum, Ouham-Pendé prefecture, and Bossangoa, Ouham prefecture. In addition, UNDP donated materials and equipment to the courts, prisons and police stations.

XII. Child protection

49. UNICEF and BINUCA continued to collaborate on the issue of child protection in the country. The process of releasing and reintegrating children associated with armed forces and groups continued as planned, despite significant logistic and security constraints. Since the beginning of 2012, a total of 157 children have been referred to transit and orientation centres and/or foster families for temporary care. Among these, the Ministry of Social Affairs, National Solidarity and Gender Promotion, verified the demobilization of 32 children, while 125 children were released by armed groups, following the intervention of the United Nations monitoring and reporting task force.

50. BINUCA provided logistic support to UNICEF in the organization of a training programme on temporary care, and social and community reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups, on 9 and 10 June. Participants included representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs, National Solidarity and Gender Promotion and other partners. Meanwhile implementing partners have engaged in sensitization campaigns to prevent re-recruitment of children and to facilitate their reintegration in communities of origin.

51. A total of 55 judges, 65 police officers, 35 social workers and 30 prison guards from the juvenile judiciary system received training on procedures for preliminary investigations and court rulings. Coordination, data collection and reporting have been reinforced through the Juvenile Protection Department of the Ministry of Justice and Moralization, which ensures liaison with child tribunals in the country.

52. In addition to the three juvenile tribunals, two other courts are now ensuring the holding of hearings for cases concerning children, despite their limited resources. One hundred ninety-eight girls and boys in conflict with the law have benefited from measures alternative to detention in the rehabilitation centres supported by UNICEF, while 24 children remained in detention.

53. With the technical support of UNICEF, the gender-based violence sub-cluster is now fully functional and is holding regular meetings.

XIII. Gender

54. During the reporting period, BINUCA increased its efforts to support the participation of women in governance, conflict resolution and consolidation of peace. BINUCA has strengthened its collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs, National Solidarity and Gender Promotion and UNFPA to promote women's involvement in the development of an action plan in support of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Further to the engagement of the Government to serve as one of the pilot countries for advancing the commitment of the seven-point action plan for women's participation in peacebuilding, a results framework was developed in July by the United Nations Gender Thematic Group, with the technical support of the Peacebuilding Support Office. The purpose is to implement the two commitments that it has prioritized, namely, conflict resolution and post-conflict governance.

55. BINUCA provided women with training on the role of women in peace processes prior to the negotiations in August 2012 between the Government and

CPJP, which led to the accession of this political-military group to the 2008 Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Women were well represented in the CPJP delegation and actively participated in the negotiations. On 21 September, a consultation was held among women from various networks, institutions and civil society organizations to review the draft electoral code. They also developed a strategy to ensure that their views would be considered during the fourth workshop on the electoral code.

56. The commemoration of the Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security, on 23 July, was highlighted by a round-table discussion between women parliamentarians and internally displaced women in Argoumar, Mbomou prefecture, an area affected by the presence of LRA. Participants made recommendations focusing on insecurity and humanitarian concerns; and BINUCA is mobilizing resources to address the humanitarian and security needs of the communities.

XIV. Peacebuilding Fund

57. From 24 June to 6 July, a mandatory and independent evaluation commissioned by the Peacebuilding Support Office in consultation with the Peacebuilding Fund Joint Steering Committee was organized to evaluate the 26 Peacebuilding Fund projects, totalling $30 million. The report concluded that there had been significant peacebuilding advances during the implementation phases of the projects between 2008 and 2012, including the holding of presidential and legislative elections in 2011. In addition, the report stressed that the projects had helped in accelerating the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process of armed groups and in the reaching of a consensus with armed groups on the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers. However, the evaluation also noted that the overall coherence of the strategy could have been greater, and that national and local actors could have been more involved at the earliest stages of project selection so as to improve ownership and foster capacity-building.

XV. Activities of the Peacebuilding Commission

58. The Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Jan Grauls, announced that he was relinquishing his mandate effective 1 June 2012. Consultations are ongoing between the Central African authorities and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Abdul Momen, with respect to designating a new Chair of the configuration.

XVI. Integration and a common United Nations vision for the Central African Republic

59. BINUCA and the United Nations country team have made significant progress in the implementation of the five-year peace consolidation and development assistance framework, which started in January 2012. To this end, the programme implementation arrangements to ensure the delivery of the agreed results have been formalized. These include revitalized integrated joint action plans; the strengthening of the monitoring and evaluation group to support the programme management team

in assessing progress towards achieving the agreed results; and strengthened framework thematic groups, which are focusing on cross-cutting issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS, youth and communication.

60. Some achievements have been registered, including support provided to the Government for the preparation of its national report on sustainable development presented at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20-22 June 2012); a revitalized joint HIV/AIDS programme agreed between the Government and the United Nations, which has been finalized and is being implemented; and the preparation of a joint sectoral strategy on gender and poverty reduction. The United Nations is supporting the implementation of the New Deal in the Central African Republic, which is one of the pilot countries for the period 2012-2015.

61. In order to strengthen integration and coordination mechanisms in the country, the Policy Coordination Group developed modalities for further operationalizing integration mechanisms in the Central African Republic. My Special Representative is making every effort to develop synergies with other United Nations entities on such strategies as operating from common premises in the field and pooling resources wherever possible, which will yield the cost savings required to fill resource gaps and increase efficiency in the delivery of mandates.

XVII. Observations and recommendations

62. The consensus that emerged on the revised electoral code is an important political breakthrough. The exercise was important in building confidence among the political stakeholders and in securing agreement on an election management body. I encourage the National Assembly to adopt the revised electoral code as accepted by all stakeholders. The United Nations will support the Government in implementing the approved electoral reforms.

63. The security situation in the Central African Republic remains precarious. I call on all parties to put an immediate end to hostilities and re-engage in dialogue towards the launch of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, and ensure the effective implementation of the 2008 Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

64. I call on the Government to continue to work closely with the United Nations and international partners in addressing the remaining security challenges and in fostering social cohesion. At the same time, the Government should take concrete steps to improve the rule of law and respect for human rights, particularly within the security and defence forces.

65. The further erosion of security throughout the country could impact negatively on humanitarian access to vulnerable segments of the population. The expansion of humanitarian assistance and operations in the Vakaga and Bamingui-Bangoran prefectures, which have witnessed an influx of returning internally displaced persons to their villages, is imperative. I take note of the efforts by the Government to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations in the affected regions of the country. I am deeply concerned, however, about the persistent vulnerability of civilians, especially women and children, in the areas in which illegal armed groups continue to operate.

66. The persistent lack of essential social services continues to undermine the efforts of communities to become resilient to shocks and conflicts. It is important for the Government, supported by its partners, to invest in the provision of basic social services and in infrastructure development. The incidents of 2 August in Bangui demonstrate the significance of social issues and the need to address some of the root causes of social discontent. I call upon the Government to step up its efforts to improve the basic living conditions of the population.

67. I am encouraged by the Government's continued commitment to implementing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. I call on the authorities to demonstrate the same level of engagement on security sector reform. The adoption of a consensual and realistic national security sector reform strategy is critical to enabling international support in this endeavour. The strategy should include clear and consistent modalities for the integration of ex-combatants into the defence and security forces. The Government must make the adoption of such a strategy a priority. The United Nations stands ready to support the Government in this strategic exercise.

68. I commend the international community for its financial support to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The successful completion of the reintegration component of the process will be instrumental in ensuring that the progress towards peace consolidation is irreversible.

69. The Government's commitment to the fight against LRA, in particular its participation in the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of LRA, is noteworthy. The persistent threat to the civilian population posed by the foreign armed group is a cause for serious concern. I urge international partners to continue to support the Central African authorities so as to enable them to implement a comprehensive national response, which not only encourages defections within the LRA ranks but also contributes to the socioeconomic development of LRA-affected areas.

70. Through the revival by the Governments of the Central African Republic and Chad of their joint commission, they have access to a useful platform for cooperation between States and achieving enhanced security along their common borders. I encourage the Government of the Central African Republic to revive similar instruments with other countries of the region.

71. I welcome the adoption of the national strategy to fight corruption and urge the national authorities to implement it effectively. I encourage international partners to assist the Government accordingly.

72. I should like to express my appreciation to regional and international organizations, including the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the African Union, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for their continued engagement, and to bilateral partners for their invaluable support to the Central African Republic. It is important that they show flexibility and provide the Government of the Central African Republic with the required technical and financial assistance, which is indispensable for the stability of the country.

73. The mandate of BINUCA will expire on 31 January 2013. In view of the important role that the Office is called upon to play in the peace consolidation and

reconciliation process and of the need for continued United Nations integrated support for the Central African Republic in tackling peacebuilding challenges, and following consultations with the Government of the Central African Republic, I would like to recommend that the mandate of BINUCA, as welcomed by the Security Council in its presidential statement (S/PRST/2009/5) and renewed by the Council in its resolution 2031 (2011), be extended for another year, until 31 January 2014. In the coming year, BINUCA will continue to implement its mandate in close cooperation with national authorities and partners of the Central African Republic, with a particular focus on reconciliation, political dialogue, completion of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, restoration of State authority throughout the national territory, security sector reform, promotion of the rule of law and human rights, gender equality and countering the LRA threat.

74. Finally, I should like to commend the staff of BINUCA for their commitment and hard work in a difficult environment under the leadership of my Special Representative, Margaret Aderinsola Vogt, and the United Nations country team for its dedicated and diligent efforts in support of peacebuilding in the Central African Republic.